

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 2029

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJ: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH UCR'S BALBIN

RERF: BA 1753 & 1466

1. MARCH 23 EDITION OF LA OPINION CARRIES EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW (HERIBERTO KAHN) WITH UCR LEADER RICARDO BALBIN. IN IT, BALBIN IS CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT ON A NUMBER OF COUNTS. GOVT (I.E. LOPEZ REGA) DESERVED SEVERED ADMINITION NOT ONLY FROM CHURCH BUT FROM OTHER SECTORS FOR ITS INCREDIBLY NAIVE HANDLING OF THE CEREMONY AT THE ALTA OF THE FATHERLAND IN DECEMBER (SEE BA 1753), HE SAID. ON GOVT'S ABANDONMENT OF CONSENSUS POLITICS, BALBIN SAID THAT DIALOGUE CONTINUED TO SOME DEGREE WITHIN CONGRESS AND AMONG POLITICIANS, BUT THAT IT WAS FROZEN AT PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL. WHEN ASKED BY KAHN WHY HE SUPPOSED MRS. PERON HAD NEVER CARRIED THROUGH WITH HER SUGGESTION AT END OF OCTOBER MULTI-PARTY MEETING THAT TWO OF THEM WOULD HAVE TO GET TOGETHER FOR COFFEE AND TALK, BALBIN REPLIED, "SHE MUST BE OUT OF COFFEE".

2. BALBIN AGAIN WARNED MRS. PERON AGAINST LISTENING ONLY TO THOSE IN HER IMMEDIATE ENTOURAGE (AGAIN, I.E. LOPEZ REGA). THIS PLUS REFERENCES TO FACT THAT THERE NO DIALOGUE AT THE TOP, TAKES ON INTERESTING CONTEXT IN LIGHT OF REPORT PICKED UP FROM UCR SOURCES THAT LOPEZ REGA RECENTLY TOLD ANTONIO TROCCOLI OF UCR THAT IF
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RADICALES WANTED A DIALOGUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT, THEY

WOULD HAVE TO GO THROUGH HIM BECAUSE "HE HAD INVENTED MRS. PERON AND SHE WAS HIS." THOSE WHO REPORTEDLY HEARD HIM SAY IT WERE NOT ONLY AFFRONTED BY THE ARROGANCE OF THE REMARK BUT STUNNED BY THE LACK OF FINESSE SHOWN BY VOICING IT SO OPENLY. AS UCR SECRETARY ENRIQUE VANOLI SHORTLY THEREAFTER PUT IT TO EMBOFF, UCR WOULD RATHER DIALOGUE WITH NO ONE THAN WITH LOPEZ REGA.

3. WHEN ASKED BY KAHN IF HE THOUGHT SITUATION WAS COMING UNSTUCK, BALBIN REPLIED THAT THIS WAS UNDENIABLE. HOWEVER DESPITE FRANKNESS OF THE INTERVIEW AND FACT THAT IT WAS CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE THRUST WAS VERY MUCH ONE OF "GOVERNMENT HAS ERRED BUT THERE IS STILL TIME TO MAKE THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS AND GET BACK ON THE RIGHT ROAD".

4. BALBIN ENDED ON ANTI-GOLPISTA NOTE. THERE WERE RUMORS OF GOLPES FROM BOTH SIDES, HE SAID, AND WARNED THAT BOTH GOVERNORS AND GOVERNED HAD BEST REFLECT CAREFULLY, LEST IN TRYING TO CORRECT ONE ILL, THEY CREATE A LARGER ONE. HE WHO TRIED TO CARRY OUT A GOLPE WOULD FIND THAT THE ARGENTINE PEOPLE WOULD FIGHT TO DEFEND THEIR INSTITUTIONS.

5. COMMENT: BALBIN'S STATEMENTS REFLECT THE FACT THAT HE IS PROBABLY THE MOST STALWART DEFENDER OF CONSTITUTIONALISM IN ARGENTINA TODAY. THEY DO NOT SUGGEST THAT HE ANY MORE THAN THE MILITARY OR THE OTHER SECTORS WILL SUPPORT MRS. PERON UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. AT THIS STAGE HE AND OTHER RESPONSIBLE LEADERS ARE STILL CALLING FOR ADJUSTMENTS. BUT BALBIN'S OWN FORMULA--I.E. THAT THE GOVERNMENT STILL HAS TIME TO CORRECT ITS MISTAKES--CARRIES WITH IT LOADED IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE IF THOSE ADJUSTMENTS ARE NOT MADE IN TIME.
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